

THE  
GREAT CASE  
OF  
Liberty of Conscience

Once more Briefly  
Debated & Defended,

BY THE  
Authority of Reason, Scripture, and  
Antiquity:

Which may serve the Place of a General Reply to  
such late Discourses, as have Oppos'd a  
Tolleration.

The Authour W. P.

For whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, that do you unto  
them, Matth. 7. 22.

Render unto Caesar, the things that are Caesars; and to God, the  
things that are Gods, Matth. 22. 21.

Printed in the Year, 1673.

# THE GREAT CASE

OF

## CONSIDER RATA

Author,

Grant the common Civility of excusing the Author from the Errors of the Press, some of which are here Corrected.

Page, Line, Error, Corrected.

9.	15.	of	for
10.	8.	defected	defective
11.	10.	ten	fourteen
18.	10.	imp'd	imp'd
19.	12.	perverts	perverts
	22.	afflictions	reflections
20.	20.	conform	conforms
22.	2.	when	what
		conscience	consciences
23.		me	he
26.	17.	for	from
	32.	demur	demure
27.	33.	bat	that
30.	10.	Book	Cook
39.	7.	kinds	kind
45.	16.	one	once
48.	9.	reverence	revenge.

Page,	Line,	Error,	Corrected,
25	21	are pleased	are not pleased.
55	15	defined	defended.
	19	point Faith	point of Faith.

Printed in the Year, 1670.



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TO THE  
Supream Authority  
OF  
ENGLAND.

**T**OLLERATION (for these ten years past) has not been more the *Cry of some*, then **PERSECUTION** hath been the *practice of others*, though not on *Grounds equally rational*.

The present cause of this *Address*, is to sollicite a *Conversion* of that *Power* to our Relief, which hitherto has been imployd to our Depression; that after this large experience of our innocency, and long since expir'd *Apprentiship of Cruel sufferings*, you will be pleas'd to *cancel all our Bonds*, and give us a Possession of those *Freedom*s, to which we are entituled by *English Birthright*.

This

1671  
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This has been often *promised* to us, and we as earnestly have expected the *performance*; but to this time we labour under the unspeakable pressure of *Nasty Prisons*, and daily *Confiscation of our Goods*, to the apparent ruin of *intire Families*.

We would not attribute the whole of this severity to *Malice*, since not a little share, may justly be ascrib'd to *Mis-intelligence*:

For 'tis the infelicity of Governors to see and hear by the *Eyes* and *Ears* of other men; which is equally unhappy for the *People*.

And we are bold to say, that *Suppositions* and *meer Conjectures*, have been the best *Measures*, that most have taken of *Us*, and of our *Principles*, for whilst there have been none more *inoffensive*, we have been mark't for *Capital Offenders*.

'Tis hard that we should alwayes lie under this undeserved imputation; and which is worse, be *Persecuted as such*, without the *Liberty of a just Defence*.

In short, if you are apprehensive, that our *Principles* are inconsistent with the *Civil Government*, grant us a free Conference about the *Points in Question*, and let us know, what are those *Laws*, essential to preservation, that our *Opinions* carry an opposition to? And if upon a due enquiry we  
are

are found so *Heterodox*, as represented, it will be then but time enough to inflict these heavy penalties upon us.

And as this *Mediocr* seems the fairest, and most reasonable; so can you never do your selves greater Justice, either in the vindication of your proceedings against us, be we *Criminal*, or if *Innocent*, in dis-ingaging your service of such, as have been *Authours* of so much Mis-information.

But could we once obtain the favour of such debate, we doubt not to evince a clear consistency of our *Life and Doctrine* with the *English Government*; and that an indulging of *Dissenters* in the Sence defended, is not only most *Christian* and *Rational*, but *Prudent* also. And the contrary (how plausibly soever insinuated) the most *injurious* to the *Peace* and *destructive* of that discreet *Ballance*, which the *Best and Wisest States*, have ever carefully *Observ'd*.

But if this fair and equal *Offer*, find not a place with you, on which to rest its Foot; much less



BOUND  
LONDON  
1677

less, that it should bring us back the Olive Branch  
of TOLLERATION; we heartily embrace and  
bless the Providence of God; and in his Strength  
resolve, by Patience, to outweary PERSECUTION,  
and by our constant Sufferings, seek to obtain a  
Victory, more glorious, than any our Adversaries  
can achieve by all their Cruelties.

*Vincit qui patitur.*

From a Prisoner for

Conscience Sake,

Newgate, the 27th of  
the 12th Month, call'd  
February, 1670.

W. P.

THE

## The PREFACE.

**W**ere some as Christian, as they boast themselves to be, 'twould save us all the Labour we bestow in rendering Persecution so unchristian, as it most truly is: Nay were they those men of Reason they Character themselves, and what the Civil Law styles good Citizens, it had been needless for us to tell them, that neither can any external Coercive Power convince the understanding of the poorest Idiot, nor Fines and Prisons be judg'd fit, and adequate Penalties for Faults purely intellectual; as well as that they are destructive of all civil Government.

But we need not run so far as beyond the Seas, to fetch the Sense of the Codes, Institutes, and Digests, out of the Corpus Civile to adjudge such practices, incongruous with the good of civil society, since our own good old, admirable Laws of England, have made such excellent provision for its Inhabitants, that if they were but thought as fit to be executed by this present Age, as they were judg'd necessary to be made by our careful Ancestors: We know how great a Streak they would give such, as venture to lead away our Property in Triumph (as our just Forfeiture) for only Worshiping our God in a differing Way, from that which is more generally Profest and Establish'd.

And indeed it is most truly lamentable, That above others (who have been found in so Un-natural and Anti-christian an Employment) those, that by their own frequent Practices and voluminous Appologies, have defended a Separation from the Papacy) should now become such earnest Persecuters for it, not considering, that the Enaction of such Laws, as restrain Persons from the free Exercise of their Consciences, in matters of Religion, is but a knotting Whip cord to lash their own Posterity; whom they

they can never promise to be conformed to a national Religion. Nay, since Mankind is subject to such Variability, they can't ensure themselves, from being taken by some Perswasions, that are esteem'd Heterodox, and consequently catch themselves in Snares of their own providing. And that men thus liable to change, and so waver certain of their own Beliefs to be the most infallible, as by their multiply'd Concessions, may appear) to enact any Religion, or prohibit Persons from the free Exercise of theirs, sounds harsh in the Ears of all modest and unbia'st men. We are bold to say our Protestant Ancestors thought of nothing less, then to be succeeded by Persons Vain-glorious of their Reformation, and yet Adversaries to Liberty of Conscience; for to People in their Wits, it seems a Paradox.

Not that we are so ignorant, as to think it is within the reach of humane Power to fetter Conscience, or to restrain its Liberty strictly taken: But that plain English, of Liberty of Conscience, we would be understood to mean, is this; namely, The Free and Uninterrupted Exercise of our Consciences, in that Way of Worship, we are most clearly perswaded, God requires us to serve him in (without endangering our undoubted Birth-right of English Freedoms) which being matter of F A I T H, we Sin if we omit, and they can't do less, that shall endeavour it.

To tell us, we are Obstinate and Enemies to Government, are but those Groundless Phrases, the first Reformers were not a little pestered with; but as they said, so say we, The being call'd this, or that, does not conclude us so; and hitherto we have not been detected of that Fact, which only justifies, such Criminals.

But however free we can approve our selves of Actions prejudicial of the Civil Government; 'tis most certain we have not suffered a little, as Criminals, and therefore have been far  
from



from being free from Sufferings; indeed, in some respect, Harris Plunders: Widows have lost their Cows, Orphans their Beds, and Labourers their Tools. A Tragedy so said, that methinks it should oblige them to do in England, as they did at Athens, when they had sacrificed their Divine Socrates to the foolish fury of their lewd and committal Multitude, they sorrowed their hasty Murder, that not only the Memorial of Socrates was most venerable with them, but his Enemies they esteemed so much their, that none would Trade or hold the least Commerce with them; for which some turned their own Executioners, and without any other Warrant than their own Guilt, Hang'd themselves. How near a kin the wretched Mercenary Informers of our Age are to those, the great resemblance that is betwixt their Actions manifestly shews.

And we are bold to say, the grand Fomenters of Persecution, are no better Friends to the English State, then were Anytus and Aristophanes of old to that of Athens, the Case being so nearly the same, as that they did not more bitterly envy the Reputation of Socrates amongst the Athenians for his grave and religious Lectures (thereby giving the Youth a diversion from frequenting their Plays) then some now emulate the true Dissenter, for his Pious Life, and great Industry.

And as that famous Commonwealth was noted to decline, and the most observing Persons of it, dated its decay from that illegal and ingrateful Carriage towards Socrates (witness their dreadful Plagues, with other multiply'd Disasters) so is it not less worthy Observation, that Heaven hath not been wholly wanting to scourge this Land, for, as well their Cruelty to the Conscientious, as their other multiply'd Provocations.

And when we seriously consider the dreadful Judgments that  
now

now impend the Nation (by reason of the Robbery, Violence, and unwonted Oppressions; that almost everywhere, have not only been committed, upon the Poor, the Widdow, and the Fatherless, but most tenaciously justified, and the Actors manifestly encourag'd) in meer pitty, and concern, for the everlasting welfare of such as have not quite sinn'd away their Visitation; for some have we once more bring to publique view, our Reasons against Persecution, backs with the plainest Instances, both of Scripture and Antiquity. If but one may be perswaded, to desist from making any farther progress in such an Anti-protestant, and truly Anti-christian Path, as that of persecuting honest and vertuous Englishmen, for only worshipping the God that made them, in the Way they judge most acceptable with him.

But if those, who ought to think themselves oblig'd to weigh these affairs with the greatest deliberation, will obstinately close their Eyes, to these last Remonstrances; and slightly over-look the pinching Case of so many thousand Families, that are by these Severities expos'd for Prey, to the insatiable appetites of a Villanous Crew of broken Informers (labouring themselves with that deluding Apprehension of pleasing God, or at least of profiting the Country; whilst they greatly displease the one, and evidently ruin the other) as certain as ever the Lord God Almighty destroy'd Sodom, and lay'd waste Gomorah, by the consuming Flames of his just Indignation; will he hasten to make desolate this wanton Land, and not leave an Hiding-place for the Oppressor.

Let no man therefore think himself too bigg to be admonish'd, nor put too slight a value upon the Lives, Liberties, and Properties of so many thousand free-born English Families. Embark't in that one concern of Liberty of Conscience. It will become him better to reflect upon his own Mortality, and not forget his Breath is in his Nostrils, and that every Action of his Life the everlasting God will bring to Judgement, and him for them.

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## CHAP. I.

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CHAP. I.

*That Imposition, Restraint, and Persecution for Conscience sake, highly Invade divine Prerogative, and Divest the Almighty of a Right, due to none beside himself; and that in five eminent Particulars.*

**T**HE Great Case of Liberty of Conscience so often Debated and Defended (however dissatisfactorily to such as have so little Conscience as to Persecute for it) is once more brought to publique view, by a late Act against Dissenters, and Bill of an additional one, that we all hop'd the wisdom of our Rulers had long since laid aside, as what was fitter to be pass'd into an Act of perpetual Oblivion. The Kingdoms are alarm'd at this Procedure, and Thousands greatly at a stand, wondering what should be the meaning of such hasty Resolutions, that seem as fatal as they were unexpected: Some ask what Wrong they have done; others, what Peace they have broken; and all, what Plots they have form'd, to prejudice the present Government, or occasions given, to hatch new Jealousies of them and their Proceedings, being not conscious to themselves of guilt in any such respect.

For mine own part, I publicly confess my self to be a very hearty Dissenter from the establish'd Worship of these Nations,

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ous, as believing *Transients* to have much degenerated from their first Principles, and as owning the poor despised *Quakers* in Life and Doctrine, to have espous'd the Cause of God, and to be the undoubted Followers of *Jesus Christ*, in his most Holy, Straight and Narrow Way that leads to the eternal Rest. In all which I know no Treason, nor any Principle that would urge me to a Thought injurious to the Civil Peace. If any be defect'd in this particular, 'tis equal, both *Individuals* and whole *Societies* should answer for their own *Delinquencies*, but we are clear.

However, all conclude that *Union* very *Ominous*, and *Unhappy*, which makes the first discovery of itself, by a *John Baptists Head in a Charger*. They mean that *Faust* some are design'd to make upon the Liberties and Properties of *Free-born English-men*, since to have the *Issue* of *those undoubted hereditary Rights* cut off for matters purely relative of *another World*, is a *severe intimation* to the *Law*, which must be obvious to all, but such as measure the *Justice* of things only by that proportion they bear with their own interest.

A sort of men that seek themselves, though at the apparent loss of whole Societies, like to the *barbarous* *Fancy* of old, which had rather that *Rome* should burn, than it be without the satisfaction of a *Rome-fire*. And sad it is, when men have so far stupified their Understandings with the strong doses of their private interest, as to become insensible of the Publick. Certainly such an Over-fondness for self, or that strong inclination, to raise themselves in the ruins of what does not so much oppose them, as that they will believe so, because they would be performing, is a malignant Enemy to that *Tranquility*, which all *Dissenting Parties*, *from* to believe, would be the consequence of a *Toleration*.



In short we say, there can be but two ends in Persecution, the one to satisfy (which none can ever do) the insatiable appetites of a dominating Clergy (whose best Arguments are Fines and Imprisonments) and the other, as thinking therein they do God good Services; but 'tis so hateful a thing upon any account, that we shall make it appear by this ensuing Discourse, to be a declar'd Enemy to God, Religion, and the Good of humane Society.

The whole will be small, since it is but an Epitomy of no larger a tract than ten sheets; yet divides it self into the same particulars, every of which we shall defend against *Imposition, Restraint, and Persecution*, though not with that scope of Reason (nor consequently Pleasure to the Readers) being by other contingent disappointments, limited to a narrow strain.

### *The Terms explained, and the Question stated.*

First, By *Liberty of Conscience*, we understand not only a meer Liberty of the Mind, in believing or disbelieving this or that Principle or Doctrine, but the Exercise of ourselves in a visible Way of Worship, upon our believing it to be indispensably required at our hands, that if we neglect it for Fear or Favour of any mortal Man, we Sin, and incur divine Wrath: Yet we would be so understood to extend and justify the lawfulness of our so meeting to Worship God, as not to contrive, or abet any Connivance destructive of the Government and Laws of the Land, tending to matters of an external nature, directly, or indirectly; but so far only, as it may refer to religious Matters, and a Life to come, and consequently wholly independent of the secular affairs of this, wherein we are suppos'd to Transgress.

Secondly, By Imposition, Restraint, and Persecution, we don't only mean, the strict requiring of us to believe this to be true, or that to be false; and upon refusal, to incur the Penalties enacted in such Cases; but by those terms we mean thus much, any coercive let or hindrance to us, from meeting together to perform those Religious Exercises which are according to our Faith and Perswasion.

### *The Question stated.*

For Proof of the aforesaid Terms thus given, we singly state the Question thus.

Whether *Imposition, Restraint, and Persecution*, upon persons for Exercising such a Liberty of Conscience, as is before expressed, and so circumstantiated, be not to impeach the Honour of God, the Meekness of the Christian Religion, the Authority of Scripture, the Priviledge of Nature, the Principles of common Reason, the Well-being of Government, and Apprehensions of the greatest Personages of former and latter Ages.

First, Then we say that *Imposition, Restraint, and Persecution*, for matters relating to Conscience, directly invade divine Prerogative, and Digest the Almighty of a Due, proportioned to none besides himself. And thus we prove by these five Particulars.

1. First, If we do allow the honour of our Creation, due to God only, and that no other besides himself has endow'd us with those excellent Gifts of *Understanding, Reason, Judgement, and Faith*, and consequently that he only is the Object as well as Author, both of our *Faith, Worship, and Service*, then who ever shall interpose their Authority to enact *Faith and Worship*, in a way that seems not to us congruous with what he has dis-

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cover'd to us, to be *Faith*, and *Worship* (whose alone property it is to do it) or to restrain us from what we are perswaded is our indispensable duty, they evidently usurp this Authority and invade his incommunicable right of Government over Conscience: For the Inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding. And Faith is the Gift of God, says the divine *Writ*.

2. Secondly, such Magisterial determinations carry an evident claim to that infallibility, which Protestants have been hitherto so jealous of owning, that to avoid the Papists, they have denied it to all, but God himself.

Either they have forsook their old Plea, or if not, we desire to know when, and where they were invested with that divine excellency, and that *Imposition, Restraint, and Persecution*, were deem'd by God ever the Fruits of his Spirit: However, that itself were not sufficient; for unless it appear as well to us, that they have it, as to them who have it, we cannot believe it upon any convincing Evidence, but by Tradition only; an *Anti-Protestant* way of believing.

3. Thirdly, It enthrones man as King over Conscience, the alone just claim and Privilege of his Creator, whose Thoughts are not as mens Thoughts, but has reserv'd to himself, that Empire from all the *Casars* on Earth; for if men in reference to Souls, and Bodies, things appertaining to this and to the World, shall be subject to their Fellow-Creatures, what follows? but that Caesar, however he got it has all, Gods share, and his own too; and being lord of both, both are *Casars*, and nothing Gods.

4. Fourthly, It defeats the Work of his Grace, and the invisible Operation of his eternal Spirit, which can alone beget Faith, and is only to be obey'd, in and about Religion and Worship, and attributes mens conformity to outward force & corporal punishments. A Faith subject to as many revolutions as the powers that enact it.

5. Fifthly and lastly, Such persons assume the Judgment of the great Tribunal unto themselves; for to whomsoever men are im-



imposedly or restrictively subject and accountable in matters of Faith, Worship and Conscience; in them alone must the power of judgement reside; but it is equally true that God shall judge all by Jesus Christ, and that no man is so accountable to his fellow Creatures, as to be impos'd upon, restrain'd, or persecuted for any matter of Conscience whatever.

Thus and in many more particulars are men accusom'd to entrench upon *divine Property*, to gratifie particular interests in the world (and at best) through a misguided apprehension, to imagine they do God good service, that where they cannot give Faith, they will use force, which kind of Sacrifice is nothing less unreasonable, then the other is abominable: God will not give his Spirit to another, and so him only that searches the heart and tries the reins, it is our duty to ascribe the gifts of Understanding and Wisdom about which none can please God.

## CHAP. II.

THE next great evil which attends *external force* in matters of faith and worship, is no less then the overthrow of the whole Christian Religion, and this we will briefly evidence in these four particulars. 1. First, that there can be nothing more remote from the nature 2. Secondly, the practice. 3. Thirdly, the promotion. 4. Fourthly, the rewards of it.

1. First, it is the priviledge of the Christian Faith above the dark suggestions of ancient and modern Superstitions Traditions, to carry with it a most self evidencing verity, which ever was sufficient to proselite believers, without the weak Auxiliaries of external power; The Son of God, and great Example of the world, was so far from calling his Father's omnipotency

nipotency in legions of Angels to his defence, that he at once repeal'd all Acts of force, and defin'd unto us the nature of his Religion in the one great saying of him, MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD. It was spiritual, not carnall; accompanied with weapon, as heavenly as its own nature, and design'd for the good and salvation of the soul; and not the injury and destruction of the body: no Goals, Fines, Exiles See. but sound reason, clear words, and a strict life. In short, the Christian Religion increaseth all, but compells none.

2. Secondly, that Restraint and Persecution overturn the praise of it; I need go no further then the allow'd Martyrologies of several ages, of which the Scriptures claim a share; begin with Abel go down to Moses, so to the Prophets, and then to the meek example of Jesus Christ himself; How patiently devoted was he, to undergo the contradictions of men: and so far from persecuting any, that he would not so much as revile his Persecutors, but pray'd for them; thus liv'd his Apostles and the true Christians, of the first three hundred years: Not are the famous Stories of our first Reformers silent in the matter; witness the Christian practices of the Waldenses, Lollards, Hussites, Lutherans, and our noble Martyrs, who as became the true followers of Jesus Christ, ensted and confirm'd their Religion with their own blood, and not with the blood of their Oppressors.

3. Thirdly, Restraint and Persecution obstructs the promotion of the Christian Religion, for if such as restraint, confess themselves miserable sinners, and altogether imperfect, it either followes, that they never desire to be better, or that they should encourage such as may be capable of further informing and reforming them; they condemn the Papists for enconfering the Scriptures and their Worship in an unknown

unknown tongue, and yet are guilty themselves of the same kind of fact.

4. Fourthly, they prevent many of eternal Rewards, for where any are Religious for fear, and that of men, 'tis slavish; and the recompence, of such Religion is condemnation, not peace: besides, 'tis man that is serv'd, who having no power but what is temporary, his reward must needs be so too; he that imposes a duty, or restrains from one, must reward; but because no man can reward for such Duties, no man can or ought to impose them, or restrain from them. So that we conclude imposition, restraint, and persecution, are destructive, of the Christian Religion, in the nature, practice, promotion and rewards of it, which are Eternal.

### CHAP. III.

**W**E farther say, that imposition, restraint, and persecution are repugnant to the plain Testimonies and precepts of the Scriptures.

The inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding, 1. Job 32. 8.

If no man can believe before he understands, and no man can understand before he is inspir'd of God, then are the impositions of men excluded as unreasonable, and their persecutions for non-obedience as inhumane.

Wo unto them that take counsell, but not of me, 2. Isa. 30. 1.

Wo unto them that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproves in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of naught, 3. Isa. 29. 15, 21.

Let the Wheat and the Tares grow together until the time of the harvest, or end of the World, 4. Matt. 13. 27, 28, 29.

And



And Jesus call'd them unto him, and said ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are greatest exercise authority upon them, but it shall not be so amongst you. 5 Matt : 20. 25, 26.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesars, and unto God the things that are Gods, 6 Luke 10. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.

When his Disciples saw this ( that there were Non-conformists then as well as now ) they said, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, as Elisha did ; But he turned, and rebuk'd them, and said, Ye know not what spirit ye are of ; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy mens lives but to save them, 7. Luke 9. 54. 55. 56.

Howbeit, when the spirit of truth is come, he shall lead you into all Truth. 8. John 16. 8, 13.

But now the anointing which ye have received of him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you (much less impose upon any, or restrain them from what any are perswaded it leads to) but as the same anointing teaches you of all things and is truth, and is not lye. 9. John. 1, 9, 27.

Dearlly beloved, avenge not your selves but rather give place unto Wrath ( much less should any be Wrath that are call'd Christians where no occasion is given ) therefore if thine Enemy Hunger Feed him, and if he Thirst, give him Drink ; Recompece no man Evil for Evil. 10 Rom. 12. 19, 20, 21.

For though we walk in the flesh ( that is in the body or visible world ) we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. 11 2. Cor. 3. 4, 5. (but Fines and Imprisonments are, and such use not the Apostles Weapons that employ those) for a Bishop, 1 Tim. 3. 23 (saith Paul) must be of a good behaviour, apt to teach, no striker, but be gentle

unto all men, Patient in Meekness, Instructing (not Persecuting) those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth, 2 Tim. 2. 24, 25.

Lastly, We shall subjoyn one Passage more, and then no more of this Particular; *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.* 12. Matt. 7.12. Luke 6. 31.

Now upon the whole we seriously ask, *Whether any should be Impos'd upon, or Restrain'd, in matters of Faith and Worship? Whether such Practices become the Gospel, or are suitable to Christs Meek Precepts and Suffering Doctrine? And lastly, Whether those, who are herein guilty, do to us, as they would be done unto by others?*

What if any were once severe to you; many are unconcern'd in that, who are yet lyable to the Lash, as if they were nor. But if you once thought, *the Imposition of a Directory Unreasonable, and a Restraint from your way of Worship Unchristian*, can you believe that *Liberty of Conscience* is changed, because the Parties in points of Power are? or that the same Reasons do not yet remain in vindication of an Indulgence for others, that were once Employ'd by you for your selves? Surely such Conjectures would argue gross Weakness.

To conclude, *Whether Persecutors* at any time, read the Scriptures we know not; but certain we are, *such practise as little of them as may be*, who with so much Delight reject them, and think it no small Accession to the discovery of their Loyalty, to lead us and our Properties in Triumph after them.

## C H A P. IV.

WE further say, That *Imposition, Restraint, and Persecution* are also destructive of the great Privilege of Nature and Principle of Reason. Of Nature in three Instances:

1. First, If God Almighty has made of one Blood all Nations, as himself has declar'd, and that he has given them both Sences *Corporal* and *Intellectual*, to discern things and their differences, so as to assert or deny from Evidences and Reasons proper to each; then where any Enacts the Belief or Disbelief of any thing upon the rest, or Restrains any from the Exercise of their Faith to them indispensable, such *Exalts himself beyond his Bounds, Enslaves his Fellow-Creatures, Invades their Right of Liberty, and so pervert the whole order of Nature.*

2. Secondly, *Mankind* is hereby rob'd of the use and benefit of that *instinct* of a *Diety*, which is so natural to him, that he can be no more without it, and be, then he can be without the most essential Part of himself; For to what serves that *divine Principle* in the universality of Mankind, if men be restricted by the Prescriptions of some Individuals? But if the excellent Nature of it, *inclines men to God, not Man; if the Power of Accusing and Excusing be committed to it; if the troubled Thoughts and sad Afflictions of Forlorn and Dying men, make their tendency that way only, (as being hopeless of all other Relief and Succour from any external Power or Command) What shall we say? but that such as invalid the Authority of this Heavenly Instinct, (as Imposition and Restraint evidently do) destroy Nature, or the Privilege which men are born with, and so.*



3. *All natural Affection is destroy'd; for those who have so little tenderness, as to persecute men that cannot for Conscience sake yield them compliance, manifestly act injuriously to their Fellow-Creatures, and consequently are Enemies to Nature; for Nature being one in all, such as ruin those who are equally intitled with themselves to Nature, ruin it in them, as in Liberty, Property, &c. and so bring the state of Nature to the state of War, the great Leviathan of the times, as ignorantly as boldly does assert.*

2. But secondly, We also prove them destructive of the noble Principle of Reason, and that in these eight Particulars.

1. First, In that those who Impose or Restrain are uncertain of the truth and justifiableness of their actions in either of this, their own Discourses and Confessions are pregnant Instances, where they tell us, that *They do not pretend to be infallible, only they humbly conceive 'tis thus, or it is not.* Since then they are uncertain and fallible, how can they impose upon, or restrain others whom they are so far from assuring, as they are not able to do so much for themselves? *What is this, but to impose an uncertain Faith upon Certain Penalties?*

2. As he that Acts Doubtfully is Damn'd, so Faith in all Acts of Religion is necessary: now in order to believe, we must first Will; to Will, we must first Judge; to Judge any thing, we must first Understand; if then we cannot be said to Understand any thing against our Understanding; no more can we Judge, Will, and Believe against our Understanding: and if the Doubter be Damn'd, what must he be that conform directly against his Judgment and Belief, and they likewise that require it from him? In short, that *Man cannot be said to have any Religion, that takes it by another mans choice, not his own.*

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4. Where men are limited in Matters of Religion, there the Rewards which are entail'd on the free acts of men, are quite overthrow'n; and such as superceed that *Grand Charter* of Liberty of Conscience, frustrate all hopes of Recompence, by rendering the *Actions* of men unavoidable: But those think perhaps, They do not destroy all Freedom, because they use so much of their own.

5. Fifthly, They subvert all true Religion; for where men believe not because it is True, but because they are required to do so, there they will unbelieve, not because 'tis False, but so commanded by their Superiors, whose Authority their Interest and Security oblige them rather to obey, then dispute.

6. Sixthly, They Delude, or rather Compel people out of their eternal Rewards; for where men are commanded to act in reference to Religion, and can neither be secur'd of their Rewards, nor yet sav'd harmless from punishments; their so acting and believing dispriviledges them forever of that Recompence, which is provided for the Faithful.

7. Seventhly, Men have their Liberty and Choice in external matters; they are not compelled to Marry this Person, to converse with that, to Buy here, to Eat there, nor to Sleep yonder; yet if men had Power to Impose or Restrain in any thing, one would think it should be in such exterior Matters; but that this Liberty should be usquestion'd, and that of the Mind Destroy'd, issues here, that it does not Unbrute us, but Unman us; for take away Understanding, Reason, Judgement, and Faith, and like *Nebuchadnezzar*, let us go Graze with the Beasts of the Field.

8. Eighthly and lastly, That which most of all blackens the *Business* is PERSECUTION; for though it is very unreasonable to require Faith, where men cannot chase but doubt, yet

yet after all, to punish them for Disobedience, 'tis Cruelty in the abstract, for we demand, *Shall men suffer for not doing when they cannot do?* Must they be Persecuted here if they do not go against their Conscience, and punished hereafter if they do? But neither is this all, for that part that is yet most unreasonable, and that gives the clearest sight of Persecution, is still behind, namely, *The monstrous Arguments they have to Convince an Heretick with:* Not those of old, as Spiritual as the Christian Religion, which were to *Admonish, Warn, and finally to Reject;* but such as were employ'd by the Persecuting *Jews and Heathens* against the great Example of the World, and such as follow'd him, and by the inhuman *Papists* against our first Reformers, as *Clubbs, Staves, Stocks, Pillories, Prisons, Dungeons, Exiles, &c.* in a word, *Ruin to whole Families,* as if it were not so much their Design to Convince the Soul, as to Destroy the Body.

To conclude, There ought to be an Adequation and Resemblance betwixt all Ends, and the means to them, but in this case there can be none imaginable; *the End is the conformity of our Judgments and Understandings to the acts of such as require it,* the Means are *Fines and Imprisonments (and bloody Knocks to boot).*

Now what Proportion or Assimilation these bear, let the *Sober judge:* The Understanding can never be convinc'd, nor properly submit, but by such Arguments, *as are Rational, Persuasive, and Suitable to its own Nature;* something that can Resolve its Doubts, Answer its Objections, Enervate its Propositions, but to imagine *these Barbarous Newgate Instruments of Clubbs, Fines, Prisons, &c.* with that whole Troop of external and dumb Materials of force should be fit Arguments to convince the Understanding, scatter its scruples, & finally, convert it to their Religion is altogether irrational, cruel, and impossible. Force may make an Hypocrite; 'tis Faith grounded upon knowledge, & consent that makes



*makes a Christian.* And to conclude, as we can never betray the honour of our Conformity (only due to Truth) by a base and timorous Hypocrisie to any external Violence under Heaven, so must we needs say, *unreasonable are those Imposers, who secure not the Imposed or Restrained from what may occur to them, upon their accounts; and most inhuman are those Persecutors that punish men for not obeying them though to their utter ruin.*

## CHAP. V.

**W**E next urge, that Force in matters relating to Conscience, carry a plain Contradiction to Government in the Nature, Execution, and End of it.

By Government we understand, an external Order of Justice or the right and prudent Disciplining of any Society, by just Laws, either in the Relaxation, or Execution of them.

1. First it carries a Contradiction to Government in the Nature of it, which is Justice, and that in three Respects.

1. It is the first Lesson that great Synterists, so much renowned by Philosophers and Civilians, learns Mankind, *to do as one would be done to,* since he that gives, what he would not take, or takes what he would not give, only shew care for himself, but neither Kindness nor Justice for another.

2. Secondly, *The just Nature of Government lies in a fair and equal Retribution;* but what can be more unequal, then that men should be rated more then their Proportion, to answer the Necessaries of Government, and yet that they should not only receive no Protection from it, but by it be disleiz'd of their dear Liberty and Properties; we say to be compell'd to pay that Power, that exerts it self to ruin those

those that pay it, or that any should be requir'd to enrich those, that ruin them, is hard, and unequal, and therefore contrary to the just Nature of Government. If we must be *Contributaries*, to the maintenance of it, we are intitled to a *protection from it*.

3. Thirdly, *It is the Justice of Government to proportion Penalties to the Crime committed*. Now granting our Dissent to be a Fault, yet the infliction of a Corporal or External Punishment, for a meer mental Error (and that not voluntarily too) is Unreasonable and Inadequate, as well as against particular directions of the *Scriptures*, Tit. 3. 9, 10, 11. For as Corporal Penalties cannot convince the *Understanding*; so neither can they be commensurate Punishments, for Faults purely *Intellectual*: And for the Government of this World to intermeddle with what belongs to the Government of Another, and which can have no ill Aspect or Influence upon it, shews more of *Invasion* then Right and Justice.

2. Secondly, *It carries a Contradiction to Government in the Execution of it, which is Prudence, and that in these Instances*.

The State of the Case is this, That there is no Republick so great, no Empire so vast, but the Laws of them are Resolvable into these two Series or Heads, Of *Laws Fundamental*, which are Indispensible and Immutable: And *Laws Superficial*, which are Temporary and Alterable: And as it is Justice and Prudence to be punctual in the Execution of the former, so by Circumstances it may be neither, to Execute the latter, they being suited to the present Convenience and Emergency of State; as the Prohibiting of Cattle out of Ireland, was judg'd of advantage to the Farmers of England, yet a Murrin would make it the good of the whole, that the Law should be broke, or at least the Execution of it suspended. That the Law  
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of *Restraint* in point of *Conscience* is of this number, we may further manifest, and the imprudence of thinking otherwise: For, first, if the saying were as true as 'tis false; *No Bishop, no King*, (which admits of various readings; *As no decimating Clergy, or no Persecution, no King*; we should be as silent, as some would have us: but the confidence of their Assertion, and the impolicy of such as believe it, makes us to say, that a greater injury cannot be done to the present Government. For if such Laws and Establishments are fundamental; they are as immutable as mankind it self; but that they are as alterable as the Conjectures and Opinions of Governors have been, is evident; since the same fundamental indispensable Laws and Policy of these Kingdoms have still remain'd, through all variety of opposite Ruling Opinions and Judgments, and disjoyn't from them all. Therefore to admit such a fixation to temporary Laws, must needs be highly imprudent, and destructive of the essential parts of the Government of these Countries.

2. Secondly, That since there has been a time of connivance, and that with no ill success to publick Affairs, it cannot be prudence to discontinue it, unless it was imprudence before to give it, and such little deserve it that think so.

3. Thirdly, Dissenters not being conscious to themselves of any just Forfeiture of that Favour, are as well griev'd in their Resentments of this Alteration, as the contrary did oblige them to very gratefull Acknowledgments.

4. Fourthly, this must be done to gratifie all, or the greatest Part, or but some few only; it is a demonstration all are pleas'd with it; that the greatest Number is not, *the empty publick Auditories will speak*: In short, how should either be, when six Parties are sacrificed to the



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seventh; that this cannot be Prudence, *common Maxims* and *Observations* prove.

5. Fifthly, It strikes fatally at *Protestant-fraternity*; for will the *Papists* say, Did *Protestants* exclaim against us, for *Persecution*, and are they now the *Adversaries* themselves? Was it an *Instance* of *Weakness* in our Religion, and it's become a *Demonstration* in theirs? Have they transmuted it from *Antichristian* in us, to *Christian* in themselves? Let *Persecutors* answer.

6. Sixthly, It is not only an *Example*, but an *Incentive* to the *Romanists*, to *Persecute* the *Reformed Religion* abroad; for when they see their *Actions* (once void of all *Excuse*) now defended by the *Example* of *Protestants*, that once accus'd them (but now themselves) doubtless they will revive their *Cruelty*.

7. Seventhly, It overturns the very *Ground* of the *Protestants* *Retreat* from *Rome*; for if men must be *Restrain'd* upon pretended *Prudential Considerations*, for the *Exercise* of their *Conscience* in *England*; why not the same in *France*, *Holland*, *Germany*, *Constantinople*, &c. where matters of *State* may equally be pleaded? This makes *Religion*, *State-policy*; and *Faith* and *Worship*, subservient to the *Humors* and *Interests* of *Superiors*: Such *Doctrine* would have prevented our *Ancestors* *Retreat*; and We wish it be not the beginning of a *Back-march*; for Some think it shrewdly to be suspected, where *Religion* is suited to the *Government*, and *Conscience* to its *Convenience*.

8. Eighthly, *Vice* is encourag'd; for if *Licentious Persons* see Men of *Vertue* molested for *Assembling* with a *Religious Purpose* to *Reverence* and *Worship* God, and That are otherwise most serviceable to the *Common Wealth*, they may and will infer, it is better for them to be as they are since not to be *demur*, as they call it, is half way to that kind of *Accomplishment*, which procures *Preferment*.

9. Ninthly, For such persons as are so poor spirited as to truckle under such Restraints; What Conquest is there over them? that before were Conscientious men, and now Hypocrites, who so forward to be avenged of them, that brought this *Guilt* upon them, as they themselves? And how can the *Impassers* be secure of their Friendship, whom they have taught to change with the Times?

10. Tenthly, Such Laws are so far from benefiting the Country, that the Execution of them will be the assured ruin of it, in the Revenues, and consequently in the Power of it; For where there is a decay of Families, there will be of Trade; so of Wealth, and in the end of Strength and Power; and if both kinds of Relief fail; *Men, the Prop of Republics; Money, the Stay of Monarchies; this as requiring Mercenaries, that as needing Freemen* (farewell the Interest of England; 'tis true, the Priests get (though that's but for a time) *but the King and People lose*; as the event will shew.

11. Eleventhly, It ever was the prudence of wise Magistrates to Oblige their people; but what comes shorter of of it then Persecution? What's dearer to them then the Liberty of their Conscience? What cannot they better spare then it? Their Peace consists in the enjoyment of it: And he that by Compliance has lost it, carries his Penalty with him, and is his own Prison. Surely such Practices must render the Government Uneasie, and beget a great Disrespect to the Governours, in the Hearts of the people.

12. Twelfthly, But that which concludes our prudential part, shall be this, That after all their Pains and Goodwill to stretch men to their Measure, they never will be able to accomplish their End: And if he be an unwise Man, that provides Means where he designs no End, how neer is he

king to him that proposes an end inobtainable. Experience has told us 1. How *Inveſtment* it has made the *Impoſſible*. 2. What *Diſtractions* have ſign'd ſuch *Attempts*. 3. What *Reproach* has follow'd to the *Chriſtian Religion*, when the Profeſſors of it have us'd a coercive Power upon Conſcience. And laſtly, That *Force* never yet made, either a *Good Chriſtian* or a *Good Subject*.

3. Thirdly and Laſtly, Since the proceedings we argue againſt, are prov'd ſo deſtructive to the *Juſtice* and *Prudence* of Government, we ought the leſs to wonder that they ſhould hold the ſame malignity againſt the End of it, which is *Felicity*, ſince the Wonder would be to find it otherwiſe; and this is evident from theſe three brief Conſiderations.

1. *Peace* (the End of War and Government, and its great Happineſs too) has been, is, and yet will be broken by the frequent Tumultuary Diſturbances, that enſue the Diſquieting our Meetings, and the Eſtrecting Fines upon our Goods and Eſtates. And what theſe things may iſſue in, concerneth the Civil Magiſtrate to conſider.

2. Secondly, *Plenty* (another great End of Government) will be converted into *Poverty* by the Deſtruction of ſo many thouſand Families as reſuſe Compliance and Conformity, and that not only to the *Sufferers*, but influentially to all the *reſt*; a Demonſtration of which we have in all thoſe Places where the late Act has been any thing conſiderably put in Execution. Beſides, how great Provocation ſuch Incharity and Cruel Uſage, as ſtripping *Widows*, *Fatherleſs*, and *Poor* of their very *Necceſſaries* for human Life, meerly upon an account of *Faiſh* or *Worſhip*, muſt needs be to the *Juſt* and *Righteous Lord* of *Heaven and Earth*; *Scriptures*, and plenty of other *Stories* plainly ſhew us.



3. Thirdly, *Unity* (not the least but greatest End of Government is lost) for by seeking an Unity of Opinion (by the wayes intended) the Unity requisite to uphold us, as a *Civil Society*, will be quite destroy'd. And such as relinquish that, to get the other (besides that they are Unwise) will Infallibly lose both in the end.

In short, We say, that 'tis unreasonable we should not be entertain'd as men; because some think we are not as *Good Christians* as they pretend to wish us; or that we should be depriv'd of our *Liberties* and *Properties*, who never broke the Laws that gave them to us: What can be harder, then to take that from us by a Law, which the great indulgence and sollicitude of our Ancestors took so much pains to entail upon us by Law; An. 18 Ed. 3. stat. 3. also stat. 20 Ed. 3. cap. 1. again *Petition of Right*, An. 3. Car. and more fully in *Magna Charta*; further peruse 37 Ed. 1. cap. 8. 28. 42 Ed. 3. cap. 3. 28 Hen. cap. 7.

And we are perswaded, that no Temporary Subsequential Law whatever, to our Fundamental Rights (as this of Force on Conscience is) can invalid so essential a part of the Government, as an *English Liberty* and *Property*: Nor that it's in the power of any on Earth, to deprive us of them, till we have first done it our selves, by such *Exorbitant Facts*, as these very Laws prohibit, and make our Forfeiture of that benefit we should otherwise receive by them; for these being such Cardinal and Fundamental Points of *English Law-Doctrine*, individually, and by the collective body of the People agreed to; and on which as the most solid Basis, our *Secondary Legislative Power*, as well as *Executive* is built; it seems most rational that the *Superstructure* cannot quarrel or invalid its own Foundation, without manifestly endangering its own security, the Effect is ever less noble then the Cause, the Gift then the Giver, and the *Superstructure* then the Foundation.

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The single *Question* to be resolved in the case, briefly will be this, *Whether any visible Authority (being founded in its primitive Institution upon those Fundamental Laws, that inviolably preserve the People in all their just Rights and Privileges) may invalidate all, or any of the said Laws, without an implicit shaking of its own Foundation, and a clear overthrow of its own Constitution of Government, and so reduce them to their Statu quo prius, or first Principles: The Resolution is every mans, at his own pleasure. Read Hen. 3. 9. 14. 29. 25 Ed. 3. Book Instit. 2. 19. 50, 51.*

Those who intend us no Share or Interest in the Laws of England, as they relate to civil Matters, unless we correspond with them in Points of Faith and Worship, must do two things: First, It will lie heavy on their parts to prove, *That the Ancient Compact and Original of our Laws, carries that Proviso with it; else we are manifestly diseized of our Free-Customs.*

Secondly, They are to prove the Reasonableness of such Proceedings to our Understandings, that we may not be concluded by a Law, we know not how to understand; for if I take the matter rightly (as I think I do) we must not Buy or Sell unless of this or that Perswasion in Religion; nor considering civil Society was in the World before the Protestant Profession; Men, as such, and in Affairs peculiarly relative of them, in an external and civil capacity, have subsisted many Ages, under great variety of Religious Apprehensions, and therefore not so dependent on them as to receive any Variation or Revolution with them. What shall we say then? but that some will not that we should *Live, Breathe, and Commerce as men*, because we are not such model'd Christians as they coercively would have us; they might with as much Justice and Reputation to themselves forbid us to look or see unless our Eyes were Grey, Black, Brown, Blew,

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or some one colour best fitting theirs: For not to be able to give us *Faith*, or save our Consciences harmless, and yet to persecute us for refusing conformity, is intollerable hard measure.

In short, That coercive way of bringing all men to their height of Perswasion, must either arise from *Exorbitant Zeal and Superstition*; or from a consciousness of *Error and Defect*, which is unwilling any thing more sincere, and reformed should take place; being of that *Cardinals* mind, who therefore would not hearken to a *Reformation*, at the sitting of the *Counsell of Trent*; because he would not so far approve the *Reformers* Judgment (for having once condescended to their *Apprehensions*, he thought 't would forever inflave them to their *Sence*) though otherwise he saw as much as any man, the grand necessity of a *Reformation*, both of the *Roman Doctrine and Conversation*.

Some grand Objections in the way must be  
Considered.

Objection 1. But you are a People that meet with Designs to Dissatisfie the People, and to ruin the Government.

Answer, A *Surmise* is no *Certainty*, neither is *A may be*, or *Conjecture*, any *Proof*: That from the first we have behaved our selves inoffensively is a *Demonstration*, that our Meetings are open, where all may hear our Matter, and have liberty to object or dispute any Point, is notorious. Ignorant Calumnies are Sandy Foundations to build so high a Charge upon: Let us fairly be heard in a publique Conference, how far we can justify our Principles from being deservedly suspected of  
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Sedition or Disloyalty, and not over-run us with meer Suppositions. We declare our readiness to obey the Ordinance of man, which is only relative of Human or Civil Matters, and not Points of Faith, or Practise in Worship: But if *Accusations* must stand for *Proofs*, we shall take it for granted, that we must stand for Criminals; but our Satisfaction will be, that we shall not deserve it otherwise then as prejudice seeks to traduce us.

*Object. 2. But you strike at the Doctrine, at least the Discipline of the Church, and consequently are Hereticks.*

*Ans.* This Story is as old as the Reformation; If we must be objected against out of pure Reputation, let it be in some other matter then what the *Papists* objected against the first Protestants; otherwise you do but hit your selves in aiming at us: To say you were in the Right, but we are in the Wrong, is but a meer begging of the Question; for doubtless the *Papists* said the same to you, and all that you can say to us: Your best Plea was, Conscience upon Principles, the most evident and rational to you: Do not we the like? What if you think our Reasons thick, and our ground of Separation mistaken? Did not the *Papists* harbour the same Thoughts of you? You perswaded as few of them, as we of you: Were you therefore in the Wrong? No more are we: It was not what they thought of you, or enacted against you, that concluded you: And why should your Apprehensions conclude us? If you have the way of giving Faith beyond what they had, and have the faculty of Persuasion, evidence as much; but if you are as destitute of both, as they were to you; why should *Fines and Prisons*, once us'd by them against you, and by you exclaimed against, as *Unchristian Ways of reclaiming Hereticks* (supposing your selves to be such) be employ'd

employ'd by you as rational, Christian, and Convincing upon us: To say we deserve them more, is to suppose your selves in the Right, and we in the Wrong, which proves nothing. Besides, the Question is not barely this, whether Hereticks or no Hereticks; but whether an Heretick should be Persecuted into a disclaiming of his Error; your old Arguments run thus, as I well remember.

1. Error is a Mistake in the Understanding.
2. This is for want of a better Illumination.
3. This Error can never be dislodged, but by Reason and Persuasion, as what are most suitable to the Intellect of man.
4. Fines, Goals, Exiles, Gibbets, &c. are no Convincing Arguments to the most erring Understanding in the World, being slavish and brutish.
5. This way of Force makes, instead of an honest Dissenter, an Hypocritical Conformist; then whom nothing is more detestable to God and man.

This being the Protestants Plea, we are not to be disliked by Protestants, for following their own avow'd Maxims and Axioms of Conscience in defence of its own Liberty.

In short, either allow separation upon the single Principle of, My Conscience owns this, or disowns that; or never dwell in that Building, which knew no better Foundation (indeed good enough) but accusing your Fore-fathers of Schism, and Heresy, return to the British Church. What more of this can any say to an Anti-Liberty-of-Conscience-Protestant.

Object. 3. But at this rate ye may pretend to Cut our Throats, and do all manner of Savage Acts.

*Ans.* Though the Objection be frequent, yet it is as foully ridiculous. We are pleading only for such a *Liberty of Conscience*, as preserves the Nation in Peace, Trade, and Commerce; and would not exempt any man, or Party of men, from not keeping those excellent Laws, that tend to Sober, Just, and Industrious Living. *It is a Jesuitical Moral, To Kill a man before he is Born:* First, to suspect him of an Evil Design, and then kill him to prevent it.

*Object. 4.* But do not you see what has been the end of this Separation? Wars, and Revolutions, and Danger to Government; witness our late Troubles.

*Ans.* We see none of all this, but are able to make it appear, that the true cause of all that perplexed Disturbance, which was amongst the *Homansians & Arrians* of old, & among us of later years (as well as what has modernly attended our Neighbouring Countries) took its first rise from a narrowness of spirit, in not Tollerating others to live the *Freemen* God made them, in External Matters upon the Earth, merely upon some difference in Religion.

And were there once but an *Hearty Tolleration* established, 'twould be a Demonstration of the truth of this Assertion. On this Ground, *Empire* stands safe; on the other, it seems more uncertain.

But these are only the popular Devices of some to traduce honest Men, and their Principles; whose *lazy Life*, and *intollerable Avarice* become question'd, by a Tolleration of people better inclin'd.

*Object 5.* But what need you take this Pains to prove *Liberty of Conscience* Reasonable and Necessary, when none questions it; all



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all that is required is, That you meet but four more than your own Families; and can you not be contented with that? Your Disobedience to a Law, so favourable, brings suffering upon you.

*Answ.* Here is no need of answering the former part of the Objection; 'Tis too apparent throughout the Land, that Liberty of Conscience, as we have stated it, has been severely prosecuted, and therefore not so frankly enjoyed. The latter part, I answer thus, If the words *Lawful* or *Unlawful*, may bear their signification from the nature of the things they stand for, then we conceive that a Meeting of Four Thousand is no more *Unlawful*, than a Meeting of Four, for Number singly consider'd criminalizes no Assembly: but the reason of their Assembling, the Posture in which, and the Matter transacted, with the Consequences thereof.

Now if those things are taken for granted, to be things dispensable (as appears by the allowance of Four besides every Family) certainly the Number can never render it *Unlawful*; so that the Question will be this, Whether if Four met to worship God, be an Allowable Meeting, Four Thousand met with the same Design be not an Allowable Meeting?

It is so plain a Case, that the Matter in the Question resolves it.

Object. 6. But the Law forbids it.

*Answ.* If the enacting any-thing can make it lawful, we have done; but if an Act so made by the Papists against Protestants, was never esteem'd so by a true Protestant; and if the nature of the matter will not bear it; and lastly, that we are as much commanded by God to meet Four thousand as Four; we must desire to be excused, if we forbear not the assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some is.

Q<sup>uest</sup>. 7. But the reason of the prohibition of the number is (for you see they allow all that can be said to Four Thousand to be to said the Family and Four) that Tumults may arise, and Plots may be made, and the like Inconveniences happen to the Government.

Ans<sup>wer</sup>. Great Assemblies are so far from being injurious, that they are the most inoffensive; for, First, They are open, exposed to the view of all, which of all things Plotters are the shyest of; but how fair an opportunity 'twere, for men so principled, to do it in those allowed Meetings of but four besides the Family, is easie to guess, when we consider, that few make the best and closest Council; and next, that such an Assembly is the most private and clandestine, and so fitted for Mischief and Surprise.

Secondly, Such Assemblies, are not only publique and large, but they are frequented, as well by those that are not of their Way, as of their own; from whence it follows, that we have the greatest reason to be cautious and wise in our Behaviour, since the more there be at our Meetings, the more Witnesses are against us, if we should say or act any thing that may be prejudicial to the Government.

Lastly, For these several years none could ever observe such an ill use made of that Freedom, or such wicked Designs to follow such Assemblies, and therefore it is high Incharity to proceed so severely upon meer Suppositions.

To this we shall add several Authorities and Testimonies for further confirmation of our sense of the matter, and to let Imposers see, that we are not the only Persons, who have impleaded Persecution, and justified Liberty of Conscience, as Christian and Rational.

## CHAP. VI.

**A** Briet Collection of the Sence and Practice of the Great-  
est, Wisest, and Learnedst Common-Wealths, Kingdoms,  
and particular Persons of their Times, concerning Force upon  
Conscience.

1. First, Though the *Jews* above all people had the most  
to say for *Imposition* and *Restraint* within their own Domini-  
ons, having their Religion instituted by so many signal  
Proofs of Divine Original, it being deliver'd to them by  
the Hand of God himself, yet such was their indulgence to  
*Dissenters*, that if they held the common receiv'd *Noachical*  
*Principles* tending to the acknowledgment of one God, and  
a just Life, they had the Free Exercise of their distinct  
Modes or Wayes of Worship, which were numerous.  
Of this their own *Rabbies* are Witnesses, and *Grotius* out of  
them.

Secondly, The *Romans* themselves, as strict as they  
were, not only had Thirty Thousand *Gods* (if *Varro* may be  
credited) but almost every Family of any note, had its dis-  
tinct *Sacra*, or peculiar Way of Worship.

3. Thirdly, It was the sence of that grave, exemplary  
Common-wealths man, *Cato*, in *Salust*, that among other  
things which ruin any Government, want of Freedom of Speech,  
or mens being oblig'd to humor Times is a great one; which  
we find made good by the *Florentine Republick*, as *Guiccardi-  
ne* relates.

4. Fourthly, *Livy* tells us, It was a Wonder that *Hanni-  
bals* Army, consisting of divers Nations, divers Humors,  
differing



*differing Habits, contrary Religions, various Languages, should live 13 years from their own Country under his Command without so much as once mutining, either against their General, or among themselves. But what Livy relates for a Wonder, that ingenious Marquess, Virgilio Malvetzy gives the Reason of, namely, that the difference of their Opinion, Tongues, and Customs, was the reason of their Preservation and Conquest; For said he, 'Twas impossible so many contrary Spirits should Combine, and if any should have done it, 'twas in the Generals power to make the greater Party by his equal hand; they owing him more of Reverence, then they did of Affection to one an another: This, says he, some impute to Hannibal, but how great soever he was, I give it to the variety of Humors in the Army. For (adds he) Romes Army was ever less given to Mutining when joyned with the Provincial Auxiliaries, then when intirely Roman; thus much and more, in his publique Discourses upon Cornelius Tacitus.*

5. *Fifthly, The same, best Statist of his Time, C. Tacitus, tells us in the Case of Crematius, That it had been the interest of Tiberius not to have punished him, in as much as Curiosity is begotten by Restriction of Liberty to Write or Speak, which never mist of Profelites.*

6. *Sixthly, Just. Martin. I will forbear to quote, in less then this, two whole Apologies, dedicated to Adrian and Antonius Pius, as I take it.*

*Seventhly, Tertullian ad scapulum, that learned and judicious Appollogist, plainly tells us, That 'tis not the Property of Religion to Compel or Persecute for Religion, she should be accepted for her Self, not for Force; that being a poor and beggarly one, that has no beeter Arguments to Convince; and a manifest Evidence of her Superstition and Falshood.*

8. Eighthly, Of this we take the nine Moneths Reign of the Emperor *Jovianus* to be an excellent Demonstration, whose great Wisdom, and admirable Prudence in granting Toleration (expressly saying, *He would have none molested for the Exercise of their Religious Worship*) Calm'd the impetuous Storms of Dissention betwixt *Homousians* and *Arrians*; and reduc'd the whole Empire, before agitated with all kinds of Commotions during the reign of *Constantine*, *Constantius*, and *Julian*, to a wonderful Serenity and Peace, as *Socrates Scholasticus* affirms.

9. Ninthly, That little Kingdom of *Agypt* had no less then Forty Thousand Persons retir'd to their private and separate Wayes of Worship, as *Eusebius* out of *Philo Judæus*, and *Iosephus* relates.

10. Tenthly, And here let me bring in honest *Chancer*, whose Matter (and not his Poetry) heartily affects me: 'twas in a time when *Priests* were as rich, and lofty, as they are now, and Causes of Evil alike,

The primitive State of things observed by a Poet, more then 300. year old; by which the Clergy may read their own Apostacy and Character.

**T**He time was once, and may return again,  
(for oft may happen that hath been before)  
when Shepherds had none Inheritance,  
ne of Land, nor Fee insufferance,  
But what might arise of the bare Sheep,  
(were it more or less) which they did keep,  
Well ywis was it with Shepherds tho:  
nought having, nought fear'd they to forgo,  
For P A N (God) himself was their Inheritance,  
and little them serv'd for their Maintenance,  
The Shepherds God so well them guided,  
that of nought were they unprovided;

Butler

(b) Butter enough, Honey, Milk, and Whay,  
and their Flock Fleeces them to array.  
But Tract of Time and long Prosperity,  
(that Horse of Vice, this of Insolvency)  
Lulled the Shepherds in such security,  
that not content with Loyal obedience,  
Some gan to gap for greedy governance,  
and match themselves with mighty Potentates.

(b) Time and  
Prosperity cor-  
rupted them, &  
then they grew  
States-men.

(c) Lovers of lordships and troublers of states;  
then gan Shepherds Swains to look aloft,  
And leave to live hard, and learn to lig lost,  
though under colour of Shepherds some while  
There crept in, Wolves full of fraud and guile,  
that often devour'd their own Sheep,  
And often the Shepherd that did them keep,  
on; Religious Assemblies, Conventicles; primitive Spirited  
Christians, Upstart Hereticks; thus the Tragedy began, Cain  
slaying Abel about Religion.

(c) 'Twas now  
they began to  
Persecute; they  
hated any that  
were more de-  
vout then them-  
selves: Devo-  
tion was coun-  
tered Dissaffec-  
tion.

(d) This was the first source of the Shepherds sorrow.  
that nor will be quit, with bale, nor borrow.  
their Avarice the cause of their Degeneration;  
Root of all Evil.

(d) He tru-  
ly maketh  
for 'tis the

II. Who knows not that our first Reformers were great  
Champions for Liberty of Conscience, as Wickliff in his Re-  
monstration to the Parliament. The Albigenes to Lewis the  
11th and 12th of France. Luther to the several Dyets under  
Fredrick and Charles the fifth; Calvin to Francis the first, and  
many of our English Martyrs, as the poor Plowman's Famous  
Complaint, in Foxes Martyrlogy, &c.



12. The present Affairs of Germany, plainly tell us that toleration is the preservation of their States; the contrary having formerly almost quite wasted them.

13. The same in France: who can be so ignorant of their Story, as not to know that the timely Indulgence of Henry the fourth, and the discreet Tolleration of Richlieu and Mazarin saved that Kingdom from being ruin'd both by the Spaniards, and one another.

14. Holland, then which what place is there so improved in Wealth, Trade and Power, chiefly owes it to her Indulgence in matters of Faith and Worship.

15. Among the very Mahometans of Turkey and Persia, what variety of opinions, yet what Unity and Concord is there: we mean in matters of a Civil Importance.

16. It was the opinion of that great Master of the sciences, Dominicus a Soto, that every man had a natural right to instruct others in things that are good: and he may teach the Gospel truths also; but cannot compell any to believe them, he may explain them, and to this (says he) every man has a right, as in his 4 Sent: Dist. Art. 510. Pag. 115. 7.

17. Strifes about Religions said Judicious and learned Grotius, are the most pernicious and destructive; where provision is not made for Dissenters: the contrary most happy: As in Muscovy; he further says upon the occasion of Campanella, that not a rigid but easy Government suits best with the Northern people; he often pleads the relaxation of temporary Laws to be reasonable and necessary. As in the case of the Caracis and Horatij, and Fabius Vitulanius; and others stinck'd to time and place, as the Jewish Laws &c. Polit. Maxims P. 12 18. 78. 98.

18. The Famous Raleigh tells us, that the way for Magistrates to govern well and gain the esteem of their People

ple, *is to Govern by Piety, Justice, Wisdom, and a Gentle and Moderate Carriage towards them: And that Disturbance attends those States where men are ruin'd or depress'd by Parties.* See his Observations and Maxims of State

19. If I mistake not, the *French and Dutch Protestants* enjoy their Separated Wayes of Worship in *London*, if not in other parts of these Lands, without Molestation; we do the like in remote Countries, *but not in our own.*

20. This must needs be the meaning of the learned Doctor to his inquisitive *Student*, in their Judicious Dialogue about the Fundamental Laws of the Kingdoms, when he lays, *That such Laws as have not their Foundation in Nature, Justice, and Reason are void ipso Facto.* And whether Persecution or Restraint upon Conscience be congruous with either, let the Impartial judge. *lib. 1. chap. 6.*

21. Doctor Hammond himself, and the Grand Patron of the *English Church*, was so far from urging the Legallity of Restriction in Matters relating to Conscience, that he Writ, Argu'd, and left upon his Dying Bed his sense to the Contrary: As the *Author* of his Life might have been pleas'd to observe, but that interest stood in the way; the Doctor exhorting his Party, not to seek to Displace those men in the University, or to Persecute them for any matter of Religious difference.

22. That a Person of no less ability. In the *Irish Protestant Church* did the same, I mean D. Fer. Taylor, his whole discourse of *Liberty of Prophecy*, is a most pregnant demonstration.

23. It was the saying of a Person once, too great to be Nam'd Now. That liberty of Conscience is every mans Natural Right, and he who is depriv'd of it, is a Slave in the midst of the greatest Liberty: And since every man should do as he would be done to, such only don't deserve to have it, that won't give it.

24. Lactantius reflects upon Persecutors thus, *If you will with Blood, with Toil, and with Torments defend your Worship, it shall not thereby be Defended but Polluted*, lib. 5. cap. 20.

25. Hillary against Auxentius, saith, *The Christian Church does not persecute, but is persecuted*.

26. Jerom, thus, *Heresie must be cut off with the Sword of the Spirit*, Proam lib. 4.

27. Chrysostom saith, *That it is not the manner of the Children of God to persecute about their Religion, but an evident Token of Antichrist* — — — Relig. Uril. pag. 192.

28. Stephen King of Poland declared his mind in the point controverted thus, *I am King of Men, not of Conscience; a Commander of Bodies, not of Souls*.

29. the King of Bohemia was of Opinion, *That mens Consciences ought in no sort to be Violated, Urged, or Constrained*.

30. And lastly, let me add (as what is, or should be now of more force) the sense of King James, and Charles the first, Men fam'd for their great natural abilities, and acquir'd Learning; *that no man ought to be punished for his Religion nor disturb'd for his Conscience; in that it is the duty of every man to give what he would Receive*. 'It is a sure Rule in Divinity, said King James, 'that God never loves to plant his Church by Violence and 'Bloodshed. And in his Exposition on Revel. 20. he saith, 'That PERSECUTION is the note of a false 'Church. And in the last Kings advice to the Present 'King, he sayes, Take heed of abetting any factions; 'your Partiall adhering to *ANY ONE SIDE* gains you 'not so great advantages in some mens hearts (who are prone 'to be of their Kings Religion) as it loseth you in others, who 'think themselves, and their profession, first despis'd, then per-'secuted by you.

Again, 'Beware of exasperating any Factions by the Crea-



ness, and Asperity of *some men's Passions*, Humours, or private opinions employed by you, grounded only upon their difference in lesser matters, which are but the Skirts and Suburbs of Religion. Wherein a Charitable Cognivence, and Christian Toleration often dissipates their strength, whom rougher opposition fortifies; and puts the despised and oppressed Party, into such combinations as may most enable them to get a full revenge on those they count their Persecutors, who are commonly assisted by that vulgar Commiseration, which attends all that are said to suffer under the notion of Religion.

Always keep up *SOLLID PIETY* and those fundamentall Truths (which mend both hearts and lives of men) with *Impartial favour and Justice*. Your Prerogative is best shown and exercis'd in *remitting*, rather than *exacting* the rigour of Laws; there being nothing worse than *Legall Tyranny*.—

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NOW upon the whole, we ask, What can be more *Equal*, what more reasonable than *Liberty of Conscience*; so correspondent with the *Reverence* due to God, and *Respect* to the *Nature*, *Practice*, *Promotion*, and *Rewards* of the *Christian Religion*; the *Sense* of *Divine Writ*; the *Great Privilege* of *Nature*, and *Noble Principle* of *Reason*; the *Justice*, *Prudence*, and *Felicity* of *Government*; And Lastly, to the *Judgment* and *Authority* of a whole Cloud of *Famous Witnesses*, whose *Harmony* in *Opinion*, as much detects the *Unreasonableness*, and *Incharity*

charity of *Persecutors*, as their *Savage Cruelties* imply a high-contempt of so solid determinations; of which number I can not forbear the mention of two, whose *Actions* are so near of kin to one another, and both to inhumanity, as the same thing can be to it self.

The first is a great *Lord of Buckingham-shire*; but so hearty a *Persecutor* of the poor *Quakers*, that rather than they should peaceably enjoy the Liberty of Worshipping God, (and to supply the County-defect of *Informers*) he has encourag'd a pair of such *Wretches*, that it had bin a *Disgrace* for the meanest *Farmer* to converse with; one having been Prisoner in *Alsbury* for *Theft*, & said to have bin burnt in the *Hand*; and the other of a *Complexion* not much less Scandalous and Immortal.

To give an undeniable testimony of their *Merit* once for all, I shall briefly relate a most notorious piece of *Perjury*. They suspecting a Religious Assembly to be at a certain place in the same County came; and finding one in reality, repaired to one they call *Sr. Tho. Clayton*, and a Justice, where they depos'd, That not only a meeting was at such an House, but one *Tho. Zachery* and his Wife were there, who at the same time (as at the Trial upon Indictment for *Perjury* at *Alsbury* was proved by sufficient Witnesses from *London*) were then in that City, yet fined not only for being there, but for the Speaker also, though none spoke that day.

Upon the prosecution of these Men, as perjur'd men, and by the Law dispriviledged of all *Imply*, and never to be credited more in evidence; several delays were made, much time spent, and not a little pains bestow'd, all in hopes of an *Exemplary Success*; which proved so, but the wrong way; for the very last *Sessions*, when the matter should have receiv'd an absolute *Decision*, and the *Attendants* have been dismiss'd (especially on the score of the Witnesses, that came from *London* the second time, upon no other account) a Letter was reported to have bin writ  
from

From the aforesaid Lord, in favour of these Informers, to this purpose, *That since Sr. Tho Clayton was not present, the business could not well be determin'd, but if the Court would undertake the ending of it, he beseech them to be favourable to those H O N E S T M E N.* If this be as true as said, 'tis a most aggravated shame to *Nobility*: what! to protect them from the Lash of Law, who went about to destroy Truth the Life of it: 'Tis a *Dis honour to the Government, a Scandal to the County, and a manifest Injury to an inoffensive and useful Inhabitant.*

Tother is as well known by his *Cruelty*, as by his *Name*, and he scarce deserves another; However, he is understood by that of the *Reading Knight, Arrant*, and alwayes in *Armour* for the Devil; a man, whose Life seems to be whole *B O N N E R* review'd: *Hogestrout, the Popish Inquisitor*, could not hate *Martin Luther* more, then he does a poor Dissenter; and wants but as much Power, as he has Will, to hang more then he has Imprisoned. The Laws made against *Papists*, he inflicts upon the *Quakers*; And makes it Crime enough for a *Prisoner* to have an Estate to lose

The single Question is not, *Were you at such a Meeting?* which the Act intends: But will you Swear, which it intends not; and Women escape him as little for this, as those of his own Tribe do for *S O M E T H I N G E L S E*: but what of all things most aggravates the mans Impiety, is the making a devillish snare of a Christian Duty; since such as have come to visit the imprison'd, have been imprisoned themselves for their Charity; so that with him it seems a current Maxime, that those must not come to see Prisoners, and not be such themselves, who will not take the Oath of Allegiance to do it.

To relate the whole Tragedy would render him as *Bad*, as the Discourse *Big*; and the latter not less *Voluminous*, then the former *Odious*. But three things I shall observe.

First,



First, That he has crowded 72 Persons (of those call'd *Quakers*) Men and Women, immodestly into Goal, not suffering them to enjoy common Conveniencies. And for his Diversion, and the Punishment of little Children, he pours Cold Water down their Necks.

2d His Imprisonments are almost perpetual. *First he premeditates them, without any just cause of Suspicion; then Imprisons them; and lastly, Plunders them,* and that by a Law enacted against *Romanists*; which, if all be true, that is said, is more his concern than theirs, If without offence, it may be suppos'd he has Religion at all.

3d Some have been there about Eight Years, and should be Eighteen more, were he as sure to live (being more then 70.) and enjoy his Power, as doubtless he hopes to die before those good Laws over-take him, that would make an Example of such an Oppressor; in short, Wives, Widdows, Poor and Fatherless, are all Fish for his Net, & whether over or under Age he casts none away, but seems to make it his priviledge to correct Law by out-doing it. When we have said all we can (and we can never say too much, (if enough) he is still his own best Character.

Such are the *Passions, Follies, and Prejudices*, Men devoted to a Spirit of *Imposition* and *Persecution*, are attended with,

*Non enim possumus quæ vidimus, et audivimus non loqui.*

In short, What Religious, what Wise, what Pudent, what Good-natured Person would be a Persecutor? Certainly it's an Office only fit for those who being void of all reason, to evidence the verity of their own Religion, fancy it to be true, from that strong Propensity and greedy Inclination they find in themselves to Persecute the Contrary; A Weakness of Skill a consequence to all  
civil

civil Societies, that the admission of it ever was, and ever will prove their utter Ruin, as well as their great Infelicity who pursue it.

And though we could not more effectually express our Revenge, *then by leaving such Persons to the scope of their own Humors*; Yet being taught to Love and Pray for our very Persecutors, we heartily wish their better information, that (if it be possible) they may Act more suitably to the good pleasure of the Eternal Just God, and beneficially to these Nations.

To conclude, *Liberty of Conscience* (as, thus Stated & Defended) we ask as our undoubted Right by the Law of God, of Nature, and of our own Country: It has been often promised, we have long waited for it; we have Writ much, and Suffered more in its Defence, and have made many true Complaints, but found little or no Redress.

However, we take the Righteous Holy God to Record against all Objections that are ignorantly, or designedly rais'd against us. That.

1<sup>st</sup> *We hold no Principle destructive of the English Government.*

2<sup>d</sup> *That we plead for no such Dissenter (if such an one there be.)*

3<sup>d</sup> *That we desire the Temporal and Eternal Happiness of all Persons (in submission to the Divine Will of God) heartily forgiving our Cruel Persecutors.*

4<sup>thly</sup>, And Lastly, *We shall engage, by Gods assistance, to lead peaceable, just, and industrious lives amongst men, to the good and example of all.* But if after all we have said, this short Discourse should not be credited, nor answer'd in any of its sober Reasons, and Requests; but Sufferings should be the present Lot of our Inheritance from this Generation,  
be

be it known to them all, **THAT MEET WE MUST,**  
**& MEET,** we cannot but encourage all to do (whatever Hardship  
 we sustain in Gods Name, & Authority, who is Lord of Hosts and  
 King of Kings; at the revelation of whose Righteous Judgments  
 and Glorious Tribunal, Mortal Men shall render an Account of the  
 Deeds done in the Body; and whatever the Apprehensions of  
 such may be, concerning this Discourse, 'tis writ in Love,  
 and from a true sense of the present State of things: and  
**TIME,** and the **EVENT** will vindicate it from Untruth. In  
 the mean while, 'tis matter of great Satisfaction to the Au-  
 thor, that he has so plainly cleared his Conscience, in plead-  
 ing for the Liberty of other Mens, and publicly born his honest  
 Testimony for God, not out of Season to his **POOR COUNTRY**  
**TRY.**

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**C**

**Postscript.**

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# Postscript.

*A few brief Observations upon the late Act,  
and the usual Terms of Acts of this Nature.*

That which we have to say, relates, either to  
the Terms of the Act, or the Application of  
them to us.

As to the Terms of the Act, they are these, *Seditious Conventicles, seditious Sectaries, and Meetings under Colour or Pretence of Religion, P. 1.*

1. **S**editicus, from *Sedition*, imports as much as  
*Turbulent, Contentious, Factions, which sows  
Strife, and Debate, and hazards the Civil Peace of  
the Government.*

2. *Conventicle, is a diminutive private Assembly, designing and contriving Evil to particular Persons, or the Government in general, see Lamb. p. 173. In Tertullians sense it is an Assembly of immodest and unclean Persons, at least it was so taken in those days, and objected against the Christians as their practise, whom he defends. Ter. Apol.*

3. *Sectaries*, must be such as *disjoin or dis-member themselves from the body of Truth; and confess to a strange and untrue opinion.* If any Subject of this Realm being 16 years of age or upwards, shall be present at any assembly, Conventicle or pretence of Religion &c. which can signifie no more then thus much, *that true it is some may meet and assemble to Worship God, and upon a religious account, that are dissenters,* such we censure not, but those who under colour or pretence of any exercise of Religion conspire &c. they are to be suspected and Prosecuted. This being the true explanation of the terms of the Act; we proceed to show how unreasonably they are applyed to us.

1. Words are but so many intelligible Marks, and Characters set and employ'd, to inform us of each others conceptions, and therein of the nature of those things they stand for; Now because we take the Act to mean what it speaks, and that the Law concludes no man guilty upon conjectures, but from the detection of some fault; we affirm our selves altogether unconcern'd in that word *Seditious*, because 'twas never our practise in words, or actions to disturb the Government; or suggest Principles that might hatch Conspiracies, or feed the vulgar with disaffection to their Rulers; but before the Kings coming in, at his coming in, and ever since, notwithstanding our frequent suffering, we have made it our business to heal Animosities, Preach forgiveness and Charity amongst men, and that they would by an hearty repentance turn to God, rather then hunt after revenge upon one another: therefore we asseert we have not done one thing that may be prov'd *Seditious* in the sense above mention'd.

2. That we are Strangers to *Conventicles* is most evident, for where the parts that render it such, are wanting, there

(42)  
can be no *Conventicle*; but that they are in our Assemblies, appears.

First, *Because our Meetings are not Small.* 2. *Neither are they private or clandestine; but in the view of all People.* 3. *Nor are they riotous, licentious, or otherwise immodest, or immorall; but on purpose to dissuade persons from such impieties; so that we are clear in the Interpretation of the Law. 13 H. 5. cap. 8. 19. and 19. H. 7. cap. 13. and in the sense of the famous Father Tertullian.*

3. *Sectaries*, is a word, that whosoever has but confidence enough to conceit himself in the Right, by consequence wants none to suppose the contrary in the wrong, and so to call him a *Sectary*; but this is but a meer begging of the Question; For to say those are *Sectaries*, do's not conclude them such, nor does the Act speak so plainly of *Dissenters*: but granting it did, yet they must be *Seditious Ones*, or else all will be in vain; where we may observe, that purely to be a *Sectary*, is not what the Act strikes at, but to be a *Seditious One*: for a man may differ in judgement about matters of Faith, from the national Religion, and yet correspond with the Government in matters civil: so that A C T upon the whole, aims not at *Sectaries* simply, but they must be such as are Enemies to the civil constitution to be rendred *Seditious Ones*, from which we have sufficiently clear'd our selves.

4. *That we meet under Colour and Pretence, and not really to Worship God*; we deny, and none can prove. 'Twere high Incharity to affirm positively, *This, or that People meet only under a Colour of Religion*; yet unless the Act had so expres'd it self, we conceive their Authority lame and imperfect that Persecute us by it. It will help but little to say, *The King, Lords*



*Lords and Commons, by the following words, in other manner then according to the Liturgy of the Church of England, meant, that such meet under a Pretence that did not conform to that Worship; since the precedent words say, under Colour or Pretence of any Exercise of Religion in other manner, &c. So that they are only struck at, who are not sincere Dissenters, but that are such, with Design to carry on another End.*

*Obj* But may some say, 'Tis granted, you have very evidently evaded the Force of the Act, so far as relates to the recited Expressions; but what if a Bill be ready, for an Explanatory and Supplementary Act to the former, wherein this Scope for Argument will not be found, because your Meetings will be absolutely adjudged Seditious, Riotous, and Unlawful.

*To which we Answer,* That as the granting of the first, which none reasonably can deny, is a manifest Impeachment of such as have violently prosecuted people for being present at Religious Assemblies (almost to their utter Undoing) so shall we as easily answer the second, which amounts to the force of an Objection, and briefly thus.

First, It is not more impossible for *Mankind* to preserve, their *Society* without *Speech*, then it is absolutely requisite that the *Speech* be regular and certain. For, if what we call a *Man*, a *Lion*, a *Whale* to day, we should call a *Woman*, a *Log*, a *Sprat* to morrow; there would be such Uncertainty and Confusion, as it would be altogether impossible to preserve *Speech* or *Language* intelligible.

Secondly, it is not in the power of all the men in the *World* to reconcile an absolute Contradiction, to convert the nature of *Light* into that of *Darkness*, nor to enact a thing to be that which it is not; but that Those endeavour to do, who think of making

king our Religious Meetings *Routs and Riots*; for first they offer Violence to our common Propriety of Language, it being the first time that ever a Religious and Peaceable Assembly would be enacted a Rout or Riot: *Nature, Reason, the Law of the Land, and common Practice, and Observation,* give a clear contrary definition of a *Rout and Riot*.

Secondly, They endeavour to reconcile Contradictions; for they would have a thing that which by nature it cannot be; for that which is Peaceable cannot be *Riotous*, and what is Religious can never be *Seditious*. For any to say our Meetings are not Religious, is not only a poor Evasion, but great Incharity; for that is properly a Religious Assembly where Persons are congregated with a real purpose of Worshipping God, by Prayer, or otherwise, let the Persons met be esteem'd Doctrinally Orthodox, or not. Can any be so Ignorant, or so Malitious, as to believe we do not Assemble to Worship God, to the best of our Understanding? If they think otherwise, they must, and do assume unto themselves a Power beyond the Arrogancy of the P O P E himself, that never yet adventur'd to tell man his Thoughts, nor the Purposes and Intents of his Heart, which he, or they must do, that definitively judge our Assemblies, void of Sword or Staff, Drum or Musket, Tumult or Violence, and circumstantiated with all the Tokens of Christian Devotion, a Rout or a Riot. And truly, If Protestants deny the Legality of those Acts or Edicts, which were contriv'd and executed in order to their suppression, by the respective Kings and Parliaments that own'd the *Romish Faith and Authority*, where they either did or do live, let them not think it strange, if we on the same Terms (namely, Scruple of Conscience) refuse compliance with their Laws of Restraint. And as the first Reformers were no whit daunted at the Black Characters the *Romanists* fastened on them, neither thought their Assemblies in  
a way

away of profess separation, the more unlawful, for their representing them such; no more are we surpriz'd or scar'd at the ugly *Phrases*, daily cast upon us by a sort of men, that either do not know us, or would not that others should: For we are not so easily to be Brav'd, Menac'd, or Persecuted out of our *Sense, Reason, and Priviledge*.

They say, *LOSERS* have leave to *Speak*, at least, we take it, none being greater *Losers*, then such as for Dissenting from national Institutions in point of Faith or Worship, are depriv'd of their Common *Rights* and *Freedom*, and hindred as much as may be, from reverencing the God that made them, in that Way which to them seems most acceptable to him.

To Conclude, we say, and by it let our Intentions in our whole discourse be measur'd, that we have not defin'd any *Dissenters*, whose *quarrell* or *dissent* is rather *Civill* and *Politick*, then *Religious* and *Conscientious*; for both we really think such unworthy of Protection from the English Government, who seek the ruin of it; and that such as are Contributories to the preservation of it, (though Dissenters in point Faith or Worship) are unquestionably Intituled to a Protection from IT.

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THE END.

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1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the President of the Senate, dated January 1, 1877. The letter is signed by Rutherford B. Hayes and is addressed to Charles Schreyer. The letter is a copy of a letter that was sent to the President of the Senate by the President of the United States. The letter is a copy of a letter that was sent to the President of the Senate by the President of the United States.

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